Approved for Release: 2018/09/20 C02989587

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The National Intelligence Daily

Published by the Director of Central Intelligence for Named Principals Only

SATURDAY AUGUST 27, 1977 VOLUME 4, NUMBER 200

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Argentina: Human Rights Controls and Abuses

A number of recent changes in the Argentine government's counter-subversion campaign are apparently intended to lessen human rights abuses. It is apparent, however, that serious violations of human rights continue. They reportedly include an increasing use of illegal methods by small groups within the military and security forces, apparently reflecting rivalries within the power structure.

BRIEF

As a result of the significantly reduced capabilities of terrorist groups, the government has taken steps to control the excessive activities of the security services. Lists of prisoners released or sent to trial are being published, and new procedures have been instituted to lessen the chances of "mistakes" in identifying suspected subversives.

In addition, more cases are being transferred from executive jurisdiction to military and civilian courts, although this will not necessarily result in improved conditions for prisoners or end the torturing or killing of captured terrorists. Some detainees only marginally connected with subversives are receiving reduced sentences, others have been granted full release, and some have received authorization to leave the country.

As the antiterrorism campaign diminishes, the abuses and violence that result from inter- and intra-service rivalries are becoming more apparent. The abduction of the Argentine ambassador to Venezuela remains unsolved, as does the disappearance of a prominent labor leader several months ago and of a number of lawyers more recently.

There have been no ransom notes in these cases, and the backgrounds of most of the victims offer little to connect them with terrorism or subversion, suggesting that their fate is more closely connected with politics in the military government than with counter-subversion. Such activity reflects the government's inability to control hardliners within its own ranks.

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